



Lesson 213

The Visit of the Magi

Story Elements

- **Text:** Matthew 2:1-23
- **Setting:** circa 4 BC in Jerusalem
- **Main Characters:** God, Mary, Joseph, Jesus, Magi from the East, and Herod the Great
- **Plot:** The Magi's desire to see the King of the Jews leads the suspicious Herod to order the massacre of Bethlehem's children.
- **Key word(s):** " _____ him" (vv 2, 8) These words describe the Magi's mission and Herod's hypocrisy; this phrase shows the polarity between the heart of the faithful and that of the fiend.
- **Climax:** **Matthew 2:8** *And he sent them to Beth-lehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I*

may come and worship him also. With this verse, even the casual reader would see Herod's treachery. It marks the climax of the story because it stirs us to revile Herod and to hope the wisemen conduct themselves wisely in their conduct regarding Herod's villainy and the Messiah's location.

Wise Men Guided

- (v 1) Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great.
 - Herod was a vicious and evil ruler who was known for his massive building projects – most notable of which was the massive remodeling campaign of the _____ in Jerusalem.
 - After Herod the Great died, his kingdom was divided up by the Roman emperor to his three sons: "Archelaus ruled Judea, Samaria, and Idumea; Herod Philip II ruled the regions north of Galilee (Luke 3:1); and Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea (Luke 3:1)."¹
- After Christ was born, wise men (Gr: *magi*) came from the east to visit the newborn King of the Jews.
 - Matthew does not mention their precise country of origin, but possibly they came from _____.
 - The journey of the Magi, depending on their city of origin, was between 500 to 1,000 miles and would've taken them one to two _____ to complete.
 - These Magi were astronomer-scholars, which means they would've been familiar with two information sources:
 - Possibly, they were familiar with Jewish scriptures, and therefore understood the Messianic countdown described in Daniel 9 – or even the prophecy uttered by Balaam in Num. 24:17.
 - They were certainly familiar with _____, and so any unusual sidereal activity would have attracted their attention and turned their minds to discover the source of the phenomenon.
- (v 2) Arriving in Jerusalem, the Magi made inquiries about the newborn king of the Jews, adding that they had seen his natal star.
 - The nature of the star has been a source of debate and speculation for two thousand years. Was it an actual astronomical event — like a comet or the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn?
 - Given that the star seems to have appeared and reappeared to the Magi _____, it could also be understood as a supernatural manifestation intended only for the eyes of the Magi and none other.

Jerusalem Troubled

- (v 3) When word reached Herod of the arrival of the Magi and their search for the newborn king, *he was _____, and all Jerusalem with him.*

¹ John MacArthur, *The MacArthur Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2005) 1123.

- (a) Herod was troubled because he saw Christ's arrival as a threat to his power.
 - (b) Jerusalem was troubled because the people knew Herod's bloodthirsty ambitions for power.
5. (vv 4-6) Herod summoned the scribes and priests and asked them whether the Scriptures indicated the Messiah's birthplace. They affirmed it to be _____ according to Mic. 5:2.

APPLICATION → How tragic that the very people who should have known the timing of the Messiah's birth, who were aware of the place of the Messiah's birth, are so hardhearted to neglect to seek him and worship with the Magi. On this Spurgeon said, "May it never be my case to be a master of Scriptural geography, prophecy, and theology, and yet to miss HIM of whom the Scripture speaks!"²

- 6. (vv 7-8) Herod was as deceitful as he was wicked: he asked the Magi to search Bethlehem for the new King and then to return with and tell him of his whereabouts. Herod pretended to want to worship him, but his true motive was to _____ the infant.

Wise Men Worshipped

- 7. (vv 9-11) After departing from Herod, the Magi saw the star. The language indicates that it had disappeared and then _____. They followed the star to where it stood over the place where the Holy Family was staying.
 - (a) The Magi entered the house and worshiped, giving gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to the infant Christ. The giving of gifts by the Gentile Magi had prophetic significance (Psa. 72:10-11). Even the specific gifts themselves carried special meaning. Some suggest that...
 - i. Gold speaks of Christ's _____, as King of kings.
 - ii. Frankincense was an aromatic used in sacrifices and worship and speaks of Christ's _____.
 - iii. Myrrh was an aromatic used in ointments and speaks of Christ's _____.
 - (b) (v 12) That night, they were warned in a dream to avoid Herod and leave the country another way.

Rachel Wept

- 8. (vv 13-15) Joseph also received divine communication: an angel appeared to him in a dream and told him to flee with his family to _____ because Herod would seek to destroy the infant Christ.
- 9. (vv 16-18) When wicked Herod realized that the Magi were not coming back, he ordered that all the _____ children under two years of age in Bethlehem be killed. Matthew mentions that the prophecy of Jer. 31:15 finds prophetic fulfillment in this tragic event.
- 10. (vv 21-23) Herod died in _____ BC, and afterward Jesus' family returned to live in Nazareth.³

Answer Key: Key word(s): "worship" • 1. a) temple • 2. b) months; c) ii. constellations • 3. b) alone • 4. troubled • 5. troubled • 6. murder • 7. reappeared; a) i. royalty; deity; sufferings • 8. Egypt • 9. male • 10. 4

² Charles Spurgeon, *An Exposition of Matthew: The Gospel of the Kingdom* (Springfield: Particular Baptist Press, 2015) 6.

³ Matthew mentions the return to Nazareth as a fulfillment of the prophecy that states *he shall be called a Nazarene*. Matthew is not quoting verbatim an Old Testament passage, but possibly alluding to Isa. 11:1 with the relation of Nazareth the name and *netzar* (branch) the Hebrew word.